Refund of excess Railway Freight

*567. SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA :

SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the excess freight to the tune of Rs. 28 crores recovered by the South Eastern Railway, Kolkata, from the Gujarat Electricity Board, is to be refunded;

(b) if so, since when the matter is pending;

(c) by when the amount would be refunded to the Gujarat Electricity Board;

(d) whether the 15 per cent surcharge levied on the "To Pay" rakes, not indented by Gujarat Electricity Board for the period from October, 1997 to October, 1998, is to be refunded; and

(e) if so, by when; if not the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR) : (a) to (c) The papers of refund claims of Rs. 28 crores approximately filed earlier by the Gujarat Electricity Board with the South Eastern Railway had got destroyed in a fire in Railway's Refund Office on 4-7-1999. An amount of Rs. 1.36 crore had been paid before 4-7-1999. Claims for the balance amount were re-submitted in February, 2000 and are under verfication. No refund is being allowed now on these cases as the claims found admissible would get adjusted against the outstanding amounts payable by the Gujarat Electricity Board to the Railways. This is a continuous process.

(d) No Sir.

(e) Does not arise. Railway levy 'To-pay' surcharge of 15% when freight for the coal consignment is not paid at the booking station or under any of the approved mode of payment.

Discrimination against the farmers in WTO Agreement

*568. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the WTO agreement is very discriminatory against the farmers of developing countries, as it is against the farmers of developed countries;

(b) what is the limit of subsidy on farm products in developing countries and what is the limit on such products in developed countries; and

(c) the reasons for this discrimination and whether this question would be taken up with the WTO ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH) : (a) to (c) WTO Agreement provides a non discriminatory, rule based, predictable multilateral framework for trade among member countries. Under the Agreement on Agriculture, the permissible level (de-minimis) of domestic support expressed in terms of Aggregate Measure of Support (Amber Box) is 10% and 5% of the total value of the agricultural produce respectively for developing countries and developed countries. The domestic support given to low income or resource poor farmers in developing countries is also excluded from the Aggregate Measure of Support.

During the on-going agricultural negotiations under Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture, India has demanded additional flexibility for developing countries in providing subsidies or domestic support to take care of their food security, poverty alleviation and rural employment concerns.

Policy for Empowerment of Women

*569. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have finalised the National Policy for Empowerment of Women; and

(b) if so, what are the definite goals, targets and policy prescriptions for raising the status of women ?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The goal of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include :

(i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential;